



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1307 Vienna, 25 March 2021

EU Statement on “Russia’s Ongoing Aggression against Ukraine and Illegal Occupation of Crimea”

Madam Chair, although the number of ceasefire violations continue to remain well below the average level in 2020 before the additional measures came into force, we are concerned that the gradual but steady increase in ceasefire violations, and in particular the increased level of casualties among military staff as reported by Ukraine, are making the security situation along the contact line fragile. We urge the sides to adhere to the ceasefire, in order to allow for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, which consist of the Minsk Protocol of 5 September 2014, the Minsk Memorandum of 19 September 2014 and the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015. We underline Russia's responsibility as a signatory of the Minsk agreements and urge Russia to implement the provisions that it has committed itself to.

We regret that the TCG meeting last week again was impeded from making progress on a ‘coordination mechanism’ to respond to ceasefire violations, nor on the security guarantees necessary to allow for repair works at the Krasnohorivka gas distribution station near Marinka, in the non-government controlled part of the Donetsk region. It is also regrettable that, despite the readiness shown by Ukraine, there was still no agreement on the implementation on the new disengagement areas or on the 19 new demining zones. We once again call on Russia to return its military officers to the JCCC.

We welcome the fact that Ukraine opened the Zolote and Shchastia entry-exit checkpoints already on 10 November, as agreed. We call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to operationalise these checkpoints and to open all currently closed EECPs, without further delay.

The SMM is the most valuable asset of the international community as it provides reliable and objective information on the security and humanitarian situation on the ground and facilitates dialogue in line with its mandate. We therefore call, in particular on one participating State, to urgently pave the way towards a timely approval of both the SMM budget and the extension of the Mission mandate.

We condemn all attempts to impose Russian laws and regulations upon the population in the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine. Actions such as the simplified and selective procedure to obtain Russian citizenship, forced passportization and widespread drafting of residents of the Crimean peninsula into the Russian Armed Forces in Crimea are examples of violations of international law and fundamental OSCE principles and commitments. We are also concerned about recent statements, including from Russian officials, claiming that those who have obtained Russian passports in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine should also be able to participate in the Russian State Duma elections held in September this year. We stress that the holding of Russian elections in Ukrainian territory, without the consent of Ukraine, would run counter to the spirit of the Minsk agreements and would violate the territorial integrity of Ukraine as a sovereign State.

We remain concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. In 2020, courts in Crimea issued deportation and forcible transfer orders against at least 105 Ukrainian citizens on the basis that they did not possess Russian passports or that they had failed to apply for, or to obtain, Russian residence permits. We also regret that a Russian Presidential decree adding most of the illegally annexed Crimea and city of Sevastopol to the list of border territories of the Russian Federation in which non-Russian citizens are prevented from owning land, came into force on 20 March 2021. The European Union does not recognise this decree, which is a violation of international humanitarian law. This decree, and the imposition of Russian citizenship, is yet another attempt to forcibly integrate the illegally-annexed peninsula into Russia.

The EU remains firm in its call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full in order to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with the OSCE principles and commitments. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility in this regard and to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We again call on

Russia to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. The duration of the European Union's sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to uphold these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilising the situation and reversing moves that contravene these principles. We strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognise. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the UKRAINE, REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.